

Statewide AIDS Program for Latinos: Florida

(From a CDC Satellite Broadcast on November 15, 2007)

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Raul Romaguera] Next, we will hear about an important step that some states are taking in the response to HIV prevention. For example, the State of Florida has an HIV prevention program for Latinos with a full-time coordinator and a statewide advisory board.

[Alberto Santana] In the State of Florida, Latinos comprise the largest ethnic/racial minority group and also comprise the second group most impacted by HIV and AIDS. The Bureau of HIV/AIDS, Florida Department of Health, decided to implement a statewide Latino HIV/AIDS initiative. The Statewide Latino HIV/AIDS Initiative is led by a statewide Latino AIDS coordinator which is housed in the Miami-Dade County Health Department. Why the Miami-Dade County Health Department? Because Miami is the home to the largest Latino population in the State of Florida, remarkably making 57% of the county's population. And we count on the expertise of the staff to develop these initiatives.

The statewide initiative also is supported through a statewide Latino advisory body. The statewide Latino advisory body provides guidance, policy recommendations, and programmatic recommendations to the statewide Latino AIDS coordinator. We've successfully been able to implement an adaptation of interventions, the creation of local interventions. We've also sustained various community mobilization activities in the communities of Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando, and Tampa. And we've also embarked on a major social marketing campaign entitled "25 Myths and 25 Realities."

This campaign counts on the support of 27 local and national celebrities to discuss the myths and realities of HIV/AIDS.

[Public Service Announcement about HIV here in Spanish]

We decided to address myths and realities because focus groups, community input, and surveys conducted indicated that 25 years into the epidemic, Latinos still have misconceptions about HIV transmission, HIV counseling and testing, and other issues related to HIV.

[Manual Rodriguez] The statewide Latino AIDS advisory board assists with the Bureau of HIV/AIDS, as well as the Latino coordinator for the State of Florida to develop and implement policy and programs for Latinos in the State of Florida. We have been working very hard and during that work we have faced challenges, as well as having great successes. One of the challenges, for example, is that Florida is a very, very large state. There are differences between urban and rural areas, and within the Latino population in the State of Florida are differences as well. Some of them [Latinos] have come here from another countries, and some of them are Latinos but don't speak Spanish. Some of them speak Spanish but don't speak English. So there are several issues that we need to take into consideration when planning and evaluating our programs.

Some of the successes is that we have been able, for example, to align what the statewide body is doing with local initiative[s]. For example, in the Ft. Lauderdale area, in Broward County Health Department leadership, we have been able to align what the statewide body have provided us as guidance with very specific programs that relate only to our area. In addition, the work between the health department and community-based organizations have been very effective in mobilizing the community in Broward County.

[Alberto Santana] We know we're making a positive difference. We've seen an increase in the amount of calls that come into our AIDS hotline, as well as hits to the website, particularly where to access information around counseling and testing and information about HIV/AIDS. We are in the process of evaluating our campaign. In addition, our statewide Latino AIDS initiative has also seen a significant increase in the amount of testing conducted for Latinos in the State of Florida.

[Announcer] To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.